

The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq ("The Night Watch"). Canvas, 359 X 438 Cm. Signed and dated: Rembrandt f. 1642. Amsterdam Rijksmuseum.

On May 21, 1972, a Hungarian-born emigré to Australia battered with a hammer the left arm, the eye, the nose and the folded veil of the Madonna in Michelangelo's Pietà asserting throughout his two-minute attack: "I am Jesus Christ!" On September 14, 1975, a thirty-eight-year old Dutch teacher slashed The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq thirteen times with a serrated kitchen knife saying that he felt "an irresistible urge to attack the painting" and that he had been "forced to act by supernatural forces." And D. H. Lawrence wrote Apocalypse and The Rainbow and Women in Love and Lady Chatterly's Lover and Voltaire wrote Candide and Micromégas and Zadig and Lawrence and Voltaire expressed their hatred in art and the attacker of the Pietà and the attacker of "The Night Watch" expressed their hatred in action. Art:Action. Creation:Destruction. The actions of the Hungarian-born emigré to Australia and the Dutch teacher are, to be sure, attestations of three things: 1) the power of the archetypes embodied in the Pietà and "The Night Watch"; 2) Michelangelo's and Rembrandt's skill in evoking those archetypes; and 3) the extreme sensitivity of the Hungarian-born emigré to Australia and of the Dutch teacher to those archetypes. Reality and the representation of reality and in attacking Rembrandt's largest painting (from the Great Room of the Kloveniersdoelen; transferred in 1715 to the Town Hall; transferred to the Rijksmuseum in 1808) the Dutch teacher lost all power to distinguish between an image and the reality it connotes. Banning Cocq with his red sash and Willem van Ruytenburch with his yellow hat and ceremonial lance and the Militia Company of Banning Cocq is marching out to take part in a shooting competition and since the cleaning of the picture in 1946/7, if not before, it has been evident that the scene takes place in daylight and the sun streams down from the top left and the traditional and erroneous title dates from the late eighteenth century and the dead fowl hanging on the girdle of the girl to the left of Banning Cocq is perhaps a prize for the winner and probably a punning allusion to "Cocq" and the day following September 2, 1752 was September 14, 1752 and there are no dates September 3--September 14, 1752 in English or